

objections, this proposal shall become the final determination of the Department of the Interior.

Dated: August 30, 1995.

Gary Wieser,

Acting Salt Lake District Manager.

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Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) for Additions to Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in Saginaw County, Michigan

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This Notice advises the public that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has made available for public comment a Draft EA to protect additional habitat on the existing 9,042-acre Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The Refuge is located at the confluence of the Shiawassee, Cass and Tittabawassee Rivers, adjacent to the Saginaw metropolitan area in Saginaw County, in Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

DATES: Written comments should be received by October 23, 1995. Public Open Houses are scheduled in the Saginaw metropolitan area from September 20-23, 1995. The exact dates, times and locations are listed under

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be addressed to: Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111-4056; Attention: Stanley Jackowicz, RE-AP. Copies of the Draft EA are available during normal business hours at the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge headquarters, 6975 Mower Road, Saginaw, Michigan 48601.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Doug Spencer, Refuge Manager at (517) 777-5930.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Service proposes to protect approximately 7,500 acres of additional habitat in association with the existing Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) located along the Saginaw River in the east-central portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. This additional protection is proposed to restore, protect and manage bottomland and upland habitat that would support the existing Refuge and Tributary watersheds of the Saginaw River.

Historically the area was predominantly lowland hardwood forest, upland forest, emergent marsh, and scattered areas of lakeplain prairie. The proposal is also meant to provide areas of lakeplain prairie and emergent marshes that are either lacking or under-represented on the existing Refuge. This would help to restore the habitat and wildlife diversity the area once supported. The proposal is also meant to protect the lower reaches of the Cass, Tittabawassee and Shiawassee River watersheds that feed and support the existing refuge and Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron.

The purposes of the addition to the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge are:

1. Provide wildlife corridors by protecting, restoring, and managing wetlands and bottomland forest and upland habitats along the rivers for the many values associated with these plant communities.

2. Protect, restore and maintain the biological diversity of the area by preserving the native habitats and associated fish, migratory and resident wildlife.

3. Facilitate with other agencies, groups and private landowners the conservation of resources in the watersheds that support the refuge.

4. Provide for increased recreation, environmental education, and interpretative opportunities to the general public. Acquire, manage, and operate Green Point Environmental Learning Center in the City of Saginaw.

5. Work cooperatively with local communities on the establishment of a visitors center located near a major thoroughfare to promote eco-tourism in the metropolitan area.

The alternatives considered in the Draft EA are:

1. *No Action*—Rely on existing Federal, State, and local government laws, regulations, and ordinances to protect resources.

2. *Private Lands Agreements*—Rely on a program of technical outreach sponsored by the Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources to assist landowners in the restoration and enhancement of wildlife and fish habitats in the area. The area would encompass 7,500 acres along the Cass, Shiawassee and Tittabawassee Rivers.

3. *Acquisition of 7,500 acres by Service as an Addition to the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge*—Under this alternative, the Service would use acquisition of fee title, easements, and leases from willing sellers, subject to appropriated funds to add to the existing Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.

4. *Acquisition of 5,688 acres by Service as an Addition to the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge*—Under this alternative, the Service would use acquisition of fee title, easements, and leases from willing sellers along the lower reaches of the Cass, Shiawassee, and Tittabawassee Rivers, subject to appropriated funds to add to the existing Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.

The Service's preferred alternative is #3—Acquisition of 7,500 acres as an addition to the Shiawassee NWR. The major issues discussed in the Draft EA include Service acquisition policy, effects on the tax base, loss of cropland, maintenance of existing ditches and dikes, mosquito control, effects on adjacent cropland, loss of residential development, fire protection responsibilities, and maintenance of township roads.

The environmental review of this project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.), NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), other appropriate Federal regulations, and Service procedures for compliance with those regulations.

The Service has scheduled six public open houses in the Saginaw area, the times and locations are as follows: Thomas Township Hall (249 N. Miller Road, Thomas Township) on Sept. 20, 1995, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; James Township Hall (6060 Swan Creek Road, James Township) on Sept. 20, 1995, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.; Saginaw Township Hall (4980 Shattuck Road, Saginaw Township) on Sept. 21, 1995, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Bridgeport Township Hall (6206 Dixie Highway, Bridgeport) on Sept. 21, 1995, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.; Spaulding Township Hall (5025 E. Road (M-13), Spaulding Township) on Sept. 22, 1995, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.; and in the City of Saginaw at the Green Point Nature Center (3010 Maple Street, Saginaw) on Sept. 23, 1995, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Draft EA will be available to the public on September 5, 1995. The deadline for public comments on the Draft EA is October 23, 1995.

Dated: September 5, 1995.

Marvin E. Moriarty,

Acting Regional Director.

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